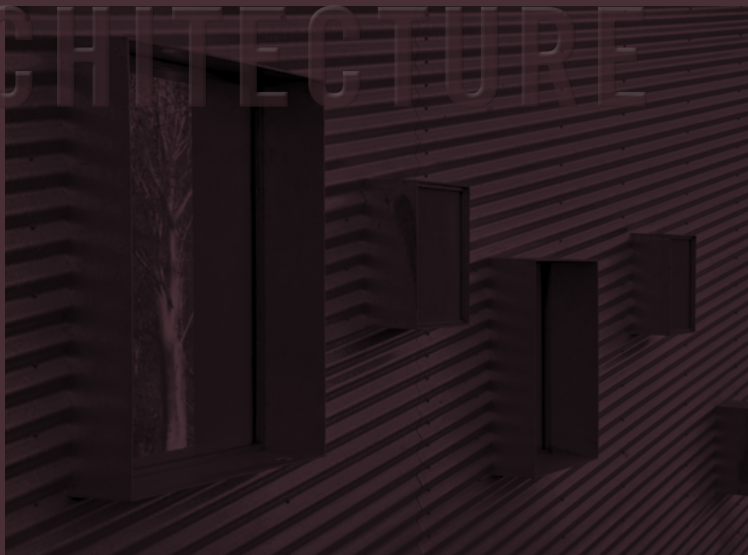


{PROJECT}

CRACKENBACK HOUSE

{ARCHITECT}

CASEY BROWN ARCHITECTURE



BELLEVARDE

Welcome to Building with Belvarde: Insights.

In this edition, we take a look at my place in
The Snowy Mountains, Crackenback House.

Rob Brown of Casey Brown Architecture has designed
a beautiful working farmhouse. He calls it a simple
box with a place for everything but it incorporates
some special elements like the sculptural central
stair and coloured skylights that are practical and
striking. Rob shares his thoughts on the design
and build process from initial sketches to completion.

I say a few words about the construction and how
Project Architect Caroline Kite, and Belvarde's
Steve O'Ryan and his team worked together to
deliver an outstanding result.

We hope you enjoy the stories. As always, we welcome
any questions, feedback, or opportunities to discuss
your next project.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Fielding', written in a cursive, flowing style.

JOHN FIELDING
AND THE BELLEVARDE TEAM





We were briefed to design a practical, working farmhouse, simple in form and materials. It would be the latest of three modern farm buildings on the property. One of the challenges was to address its relationship to the previously constructed stable and shed.

Situated on a little knoll, the new house has a subtle feeling of primacy. The siting allows for some panoramic views of the mountains through the vast north-facing glass. In contrast to the first two buildings, whose outlines roughly follow an A shape, this new structure inverts that to a V. When viewed together, the three sit comfortably into their surroundings. They're not competing with each other and yet there's a clear hierarchy between them. At ground level, each has weathered steel ends and corrugated galvanised steel wrapped walls. At the roofline, they share the eave-less, gently-rounded transition from horizontal to vertical. The small framed openings are carried over from the stables to the house to offer vistas of the bushland surrounds.

Within what is quite a simple box, there's a place for everything—the cars, the entry, the service area, the main bedroom and guest rooms, a small office, a wine cellar, and the sauna. Uncomplicated but with all the trappings of farm life in the right order for coming and going.

We were able to play with one of John's fascinations and something he is probably Australia's leading expert in—off-form concrete. This knowledge and skill demanded to be exploited. Fittingly, it manifests in the sculptural central stair that leads up to the living areas and down to the bedrooms and steam room. Three steel tubes above the stair house coloured skylights. As the sun moves across the sky, they funnel spotlights of varying shades onto the surfaces below. It's a bit of fun but also practical and rather striking.

The beautiful junctions between glass, wood and concrete were achieved by the site manager Steve O'Ryan and his team. Steve is Belvedere's longest serving builder and John's long-time friend and collaborator. The perfectionism seen in the detailing largely comes down to Steve's skill and hard work. It can be seen in every item. He has outdone himself with the exceptional level of craft.

Project Architect Caroline Kite, did a wonderful job. She worked closely with us and with John, taking everyone's ideas and meticulously ensuring the detail for each was fleshed out. Quite an accomplishment.

Looking back at the original sketches we did, it's remarkable just how closely matched the finished buildings are. John knew what he wanted. Having done it for decades for other people, I imagine it would have been incredibly satisfying and rewarding for him to build this property up for himself. Especially when he is experimenting, as he always does, and creating something so unique and special that still manages to fit within the vernacular tradition of rural Australia. There's nothing like this.











I wanted a beautiful house made of simple materials that could cope with the conditions. Up here, life's about enjoying the environment but the weather dictates proceedings. On good days, we're out skiing or horse-riding and on bad ones, well, you need an especially good house to be in.

Rob Brown of Casey Brown Architecture and I sketched out some initial designs and, surprisingly, the final result is pretty similar. It was always going to be a split level—a refinement of an obvious solution for the site. Rob had previously designed the nearby shed and stables and the house fits in perfectly with them. All three are finished in natural timber, concrete, and steel.

We've got views of the mountain range with sunlight in winter and the right shading in summer. There's direct access from the garage to the interior which is helpful when it's sleeting or worse.

The central slab between the floors is heated by a wood-fired boiler in the stable building and there's a large open fire in the middle of the living room with plenty of firewood available on the property.

Fresh produce can be scarce so we included a large air-conditioned pantry, several fridges, and a freezer as well as a section for the wine collection.

Project Architect Caroline Kite, did a great job. She was able to convince me to include some things that might not have been my first choice, like the skylights and the Vola tapware. I'm glad she did.

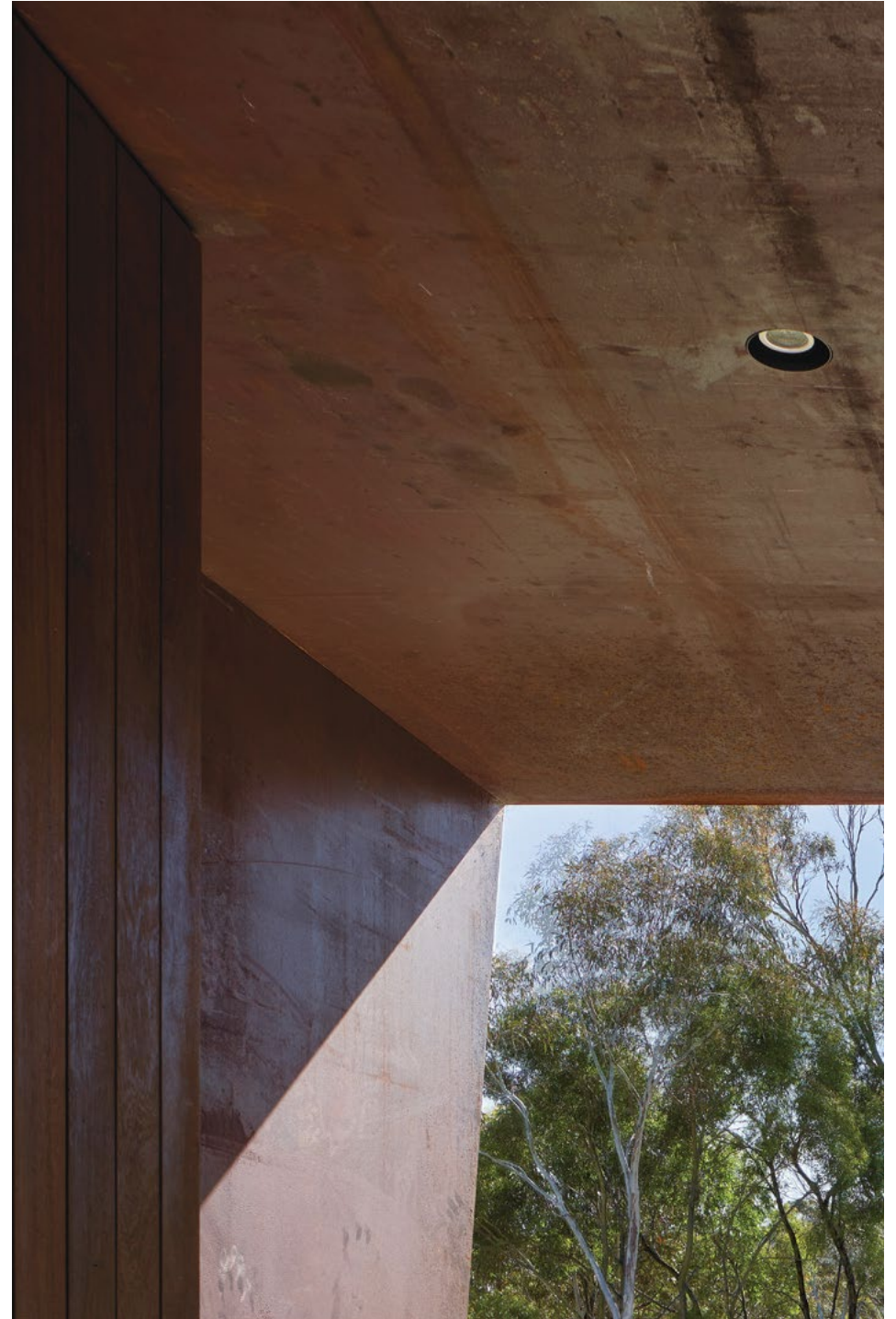
Site manager, Steve O'Ryan, who I've been collaborating with since 1980, took control of the build. The central stairs were done by Scott Waller. Steve, Scott, and the whole team did their usual excellent work. Someone asked me about the biggest challenges of the project but I really can't think of any. There are no challenges if you know what to do.

It's satisfying to have the main house finished but there will be more to come, maybe some new horse shelters. For now, I'm a very happy client.





{18—19}







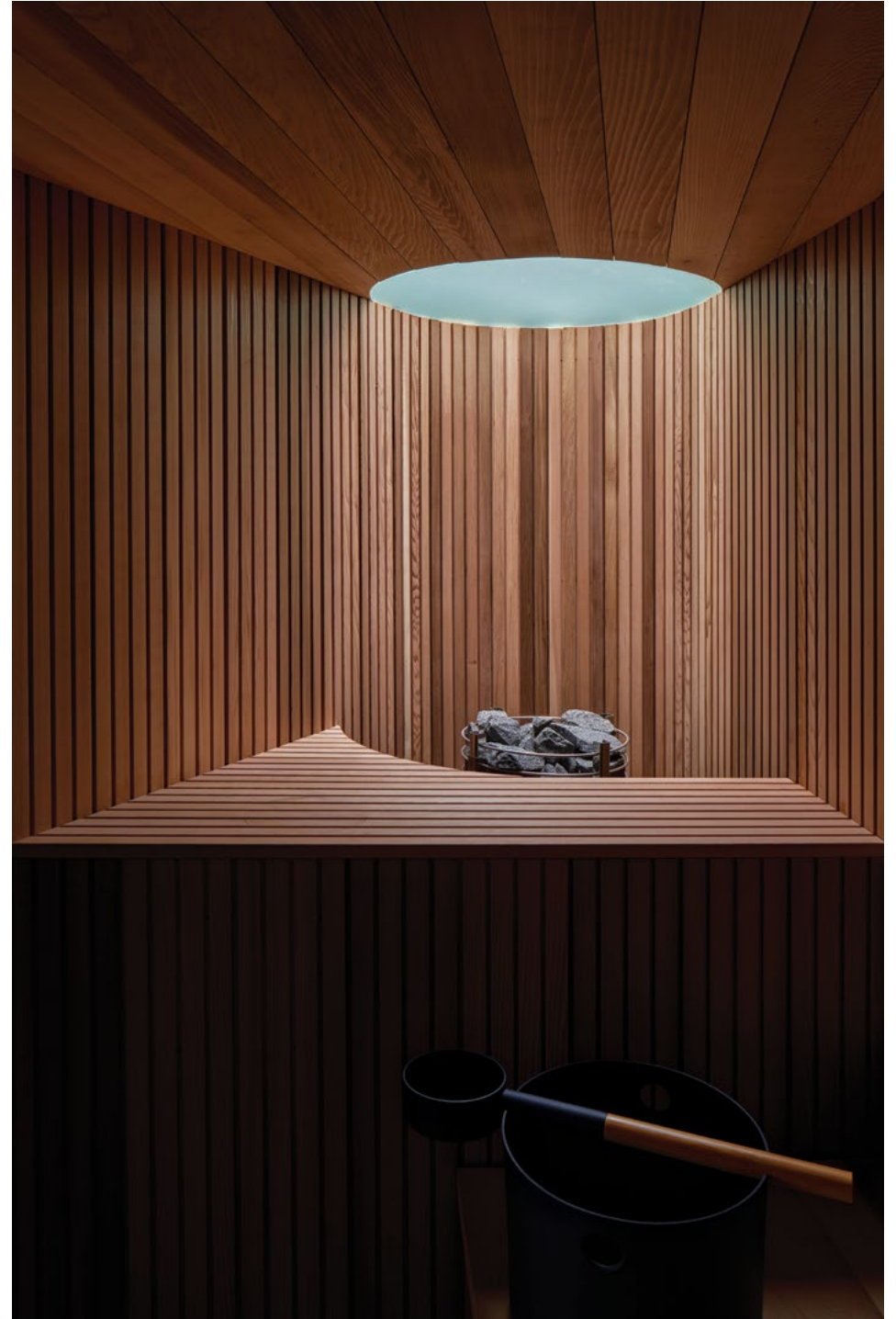
{22—23}







{26—27}



At Belvedere, we have four principles that have served us well in ensuring we maintain standards across every job.

{First Principle}

FIND THE BEST PEOPLE

It is about searching until we find the people who share our love for building houses as well as they can be built.

That's what Belvedere is—a team of us who just want to build extraordinary houses. It is an attitude that can't be driven or constrained by external factors. It's innate.

{Second Principle}

KEEP ON LEARNING

Everything we have learned in building some of this country's most complex and challenging houses is formalised in our 200 page Belvedere Construction Manual.

It details step-by-step instructions on how best to perform every critical task.

It is on every site and is constantly reviewed and updated as our knowledge grows and as building techniques, materials, equipment, and technologies evolve.

We welcome any questions, feedback or opportunities to discuss your prospective projects.



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{Third Principle}

FORM A BUILDING TEAM

It takes three key players to make a great house: Owner, Architect and Builder. That is why on each site we form them into a Building Team headed by our site manager.

The trio meets regularly to review, discuss and guide every aspect of the project. This ensures everyone knows just where we are, where we are going next—and ensures that, together, the Team can make the best decisions.

It is the best way to deliver an extraordinary house, of good value, that brings great joy to all of us.

{Fourth Principle}

MAINTAIN THE HOUSE

This came from our owners. They asked us to take care of their houses as well as we built them. So we formed our own specialised Belvedere Maintenance division. It benefits from access to all information on the construction of the house. Plus we can often call on the very tradespeople who built it.

Each new house has its own Maintenance Manager.

According to our owners and architects, we deliver the most efficient and skilled maintenance operation they have ever worked with—indeed several have asked us to take care of other properties we didn't build.

{Construction}

2019—2020

{Interviews}

Hamish Spencer

{Design}

Pidgeon Ward

{Photography}

Michael Nicholson

{Paper}

Colorplan
Knight Smooth

{Printing}

Adams Print

